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*France under Louis XV.* By JAMES BRECK PERKINS. (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Co. 1897. Two vols., pp. xii, 496; xii, 488.)

IN his *France under the Regency*, published six years ago, Mr. Perkins promised these volumes and indicated their theme—the decay of the institutions of France and the loss of her prestige in a half-century which saw her commerce rapidly expand, her resources increase, her thought become vigorous and creative. This theme is developed in narratives of the nation's fortunes in war and diplomacy, and in descriptions of the appearance and disappearance of statesmen and mistresses during the slow years of Louis Fifteenth's ennui. Mr. Perkins has a charming way of describing all these things, which lures on one's curiosity from page to page. He has worked with the documents in his hands, and this accounts for the clearness of his impressions, and after he has acquainted himself with the elements of a story he knows how to tell it. When, however, he leaves narrative to sketch conditions of society and tendencies in the national life, his hand is not so firm. One feels the lack of perspective, of unity, of proper setting.

The remarks in the opening chapter about French indifference to local government may serve as an example of this defect. They show no recognition of the controlling influence exerted by the geographical situation of France, which, since the forces of reorganization began to be effective in the Middle Ages, constantly diminished local independence and rendered impossible a development of local government of the New England sort, which Mr. Perkins so much admires. France had no choice in the matter. The dominant fact was the sea, the Pyrenees, the Alps—her reason for unity. Deprive her of this and, like Poland, she would have become an excellent field for feudal decentralization and a destined victim for ultimate partition among neighboring states. Such a question as that of local government cannot be intelligently treated without taking account of geographical conditions.

But does not Mr. Perkins err in his statement that the majority of Frenchmen were indifferent to the delights of local self-government? If they were, how would he explain the provincial assemblies of 1787, the general demand in the cahiers of 1789 for a larger measure of local autonomy, and the embodiment of this desire in the constitution of 1791? The war against all Europe in 1793 with "federalism" in the departments, cured the French leaders of their love for the theory, and they returned by way of the representative on mission, the national agent, and the prefect, to a system of centralization necessary, however undesirable from many points of view.

The greater part of this work is filled with the story of foreign affairs, the wars of the Polish and Austrian Successions, and the Seven Years' War, with their direful consequences to the international position of France. Mr. Perkins is inclined to be contemptuous toward "shallow-pated courtiers" who mistook for grand policy echoes of Richelieu's

schemes, and toward a king who did not wish to make peace like a merchant. Indeed, he is more French than the French in his indignation over the unnecessary humiliations to which the country was subjected by reckless or stupid leadership. Perhaps this sensitiveness has obscured his view of the difficulties which confronted the French statesmen of the day. To illustrate—he contends that they continued the war of the Austrian Succession after the election of the Emperor Francis I. and the treaty of Dresden had removed all further hope for the triumph of the French policy, mainly to carry out the agreement with Spain provided for in the Treaty of Fontainebleau. To prove this he quotes from the diplomatic correspondence between France and Spain. “I have the establishment of Don Philip as much at heart as your Majesty,” wrote Louis to his uncle Philip V.; and the minister of foreign affairs added, “You will see that it is all for the advantage of Spain, but His Majesty makes no distinction between the interests of the King of Spain and his own.” This was exceedingly tender and polite, but what of it? When the French made the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle they carried out their promise to Spain only so far as it was practicable to do this, and in spite of Spanish wrath at what was deemed a breach of faith. Moreover, in their efforts to do something for Don Philip, the French diplomatists were attempting to pursue a justifiable policy of state-building in Italy, which should substitute French for Austrian influence in the peninsula; they were not sacrificing France to their solicitude for the Spanish queen’s motherly ambitions. But Mr. Perkins regards this scheme of Chauvelin and d’Argenson as untimely. Even if such a plan were not worth fighting for, much can be said in support of the view that the last campaigns of the war were necessary to conquer a tolerable peace. In fixing his attention on Marshal Saxe’s brilliant victories in the Low Countries, Mr. Perkins does not seem to give sufficient weight to the fact that England had gained control of the sea and threatened with destruction the French colonies and commerce. It is worth noting that Captain Mahan believes that the condition of the sea power at the time accounts for the apparent lack of results advantageous to France that came out of the war.

Mr. Perkins remarks by way of conclusion to the instructive chapters on Dupleix and the Loss of an Eastern Empire that the failure of the French enterprises was partly due to their being undertaken through chartered companies. To support this conclusion, he relies on Adam Smith’s well-known discussion. But while Adam Smith’s observations are pertinent to the subject, they should not blind us to the fact that England and Holland have owed their colonial empires to just such companies. The main difference was that the English and the Dutch knew how to manage a company and the French did not. And the English, in spite of Adam Smith, are still pursuing the same policy with excellent results in Africa, of which the South African Chartered Company is a shining example.

About a third of his last volume Mr. Perkins devotes to a description of the intellectual and social changes and to the influence of literature. Here

again there is so much of interest to praise that criticism seems to argue a lack of a sense of proportion, but a word or two should be said about his description of Rousseau's *Contrat Social*. As a résumé it is well enough, but it lacks an adequate statement of the historical significance of the book. Whether Rousseau altogether intended it or not his *Contrat Social* was a counterblast to the assertion of the lawyers that the king was a sovereign absolute in his authority. The king's will has the force of law, said the legists; the law is the expression of the common will, declared Rousseau. Everything in all our states belongs to me, wrote Louis XIV.; the king is merely a commissioner who may be dismissed at any time, Rousseau replied. If his theories disturbed the placid faith of the men of 1762 in the divine right of kings, they served their historic purpose, and the question of their soundness or unsoundness is a secondary matter.

In these volumes Mr. Perkins concludes his study of the old Bourbon monarchy from the death of the most brilliant of the dynasty to the death of the most despicable. Will he also undertake the Revolution?

HENRY E. BOURNE.

*The War of Greek Independence, 1821 to 1833.* By W. ALISON PHILLIPS. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1897. Pp. vi, 428.)

WE take up this book with serious concern. Is it another cake half-baked to be thrown on a momentary market; or is it a just, adequate and readable account of the struggle which brought Greece back into the family of living nations? For such a history the English reader has waited hitherto in vain; and there never was a time when it was more sorely needed. If in this work the Senior Scholar of St. John's College, Oxford, has measured up to his opportunity, he is to be acclaimed and crowned.

At the outset he is disappointing. He gives the impression of dealing with his subject at too long range. The Greek sources are practically ignored. Not a word between these covers betrays any knowledge of Spyridon Trikoupes' four-volume history; while the performance of Prokesch von Osten is in constant requisition. Yet one would think the Greek statesman, describing as eye-witness and participant the uprising of his own people, were as well worth reckoning with as the Austrian minister at Athens (1834-1849), in his character *als eifrigster Vertreter der Integrität der Türkei*, compiling a diplomatic history of the struggle mainly to vindicate the Eastern policy of his master Metternich. Use is made of another contemporary history also written at Athens—that of George Finlay; but strangely enough only of the edition of 1861, although Finlay rewrote the work after that date, and for his matured views one must go to Tozer's edition of 1877. Gordon's contemporary work is cited from time to time; but Dr. Howe's *Historical Sketch* (1828), abounding as it does in most graphic first-hand portraits of the chief ac-